

7-18



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

*Haddock
industry
in grave danger
due to catch
of baby
scrod*

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Release UPON RECEIPT

Warnings that recent rapid increases in catch of "round scrod" (baby haddock) seriously threaten their future livelihood have been sent out to all New England trawler captains by W. C. Herrington, in charge of North Atlantic Fishery Investigations for the Fish and Wildlife Service, United States Department of the Interior.

Seeking immediate cessation of development of this fishery, Herrington applied directly to the fishermen themselves.

"Continuation of the present fishery for round scrod", says the Service biologist in his letter to vessel captains, "will make conditions even worse than at present, for it will result in lower catches due to taking the young haddock when they average only about one pound in weight. It also will further reduce the spawning stock with the result that the catch on Georges and South Channel will be reduced from the present yearly average of about 100,000,000 pounds to not more than 50,000,000 to 70,000,000 pounds in future years. The effect of this will be particularly serious for the smaller otter trawlers which cannot extend their operations to the more distant banks because of their limited cruising radius.

"The only way in which this development can be avoided is either through reducing the catch of all haddock in order to build up the spawning stock, or abolishing the capture of all baby haddock and small scrod haddock. If the capture of

these sizes is stopped completely, it will be possible under present conditions not only to prevent a further reduction in the numbers of haddock but to increase the abundance through the increase in the spawning stock. This means bigger instead of smaller catches for you and every other fisherman, and an increase in the total catch taken on Georges and South Channel from about 100,000,000 pounds a year to 150,000,000 pounds or over.

"To stop fishing on grounds where baby haddock and scrod are taken in large numbers, will require the voluntary cooperation of all the trawler captains. Otherwise, regulatory measures will be necessary to insure the continued future yield of the fishing grounds through protection of the small fish and of the breeding stock.

"Your cooperation in this matter is urgently requested in the interest of a continued prosperous and productive haddock fishery. Stay off baby haddock grounds if you are interested in maintaining good haddock catches."

In partial explanation of the necessity for this drastic measure, Herrington indicated that the decline in large haddock abundance, which caused fishermen to turn to the smaller "scrod", has been the subject for study by Service biologists for a decade. Results of that study show the falling off as due mainly to two causes:

1. The intensive fishery in 1930 and 1931 reduced the spawning stock to a very low level. Since then the capture of large quantities of scrod has prevented any considerable increase in the spawning stock with the result that the number of young produced in recent years is less than one-half of what it would be with an adequate number of spawning fish.

2. In recent years, greatly increased quantities of scrod and baby haddock have been taken. Thus the fish have not had time to reach their most productive weight as in past years, so that the reduced numbers of young now provide even more reduced catches.

The continuation of this fishery would throw large quantities of lowest grade haddock (from the price standpoint) on the market which would have "a depressing effect on the prices of better grades of fish; and what is even more serious", says Herrington, "it will reduce greatly the numbers of haddock on the banks that will be available to the fleet in future years. The latter effect will not be serious the first year, but in each succeeding year it will be more pronounced."

#